

Standard USHC-4: The student will demonstrate an understanding of the causes and the course of the Civil War and Reconstruction in America.

USHC-4.4 Summarize the effects of Reconstruction on the southern states and the roles of the Thirteenth, Fourteenth, and Fifteenth Amendments in that era. (H, P)

Taxonomy Level: 2B Understand/Conceptual Knowledge

Previous/future knowledge:

In the 5th grade students summarized the aims of Reconstruction and explained the effects of Abraham Lincoln's assassination on the course of Reconstruction (5-1.1). They also summarized the provisions of the Thirteenth, Fourteenth, and Fifteenth Amendments to the Constitution, including how the amendments protected the rights of African Americans and sought to enhance their political, social, and economic opportunities (5-1.2). They compared the economic and social effects of Reconstruction on different populations (5.14) and explained the purpose and motivations behind the rise of discriminatory laws and groups and their effect on the rights and opportunities of African Americans in different regions of the United States (5-4.5).

In the 8th grade, students explained the purposes of Reconstruction with attention to the economic, social, political, and geographic problems facing the South (8-4.1). Also they summarized Reconstruction in South Carolina and its effects on daily life in South Carolina (8-4.2). Students also summarized the successes and failures that occurred in South Carolina during Reconstruction (8-4.5).

It is essential for the students to know:

The Reconstruction policies of the federal government significantly impacted society in the South after the Civil War. President Lincoln's plan to return the South to full participation in the Union was formulated before the end of the fighting. By requiring that only 10% of the population swear allegiance to the Union before they could reconstitute their state governments and send representatives to Congress, Lincoln hoped to convince southern states to surrender. He required state governments to recognize the end of slavery. Lincoln's assassination did not significantly change this Presidential Reconstruction plan. Although President Andrew Johnson added that wealthy southerners and leaders of the Confederacy had to request a pardon of the president, he basically continued Lincoln's lenient policy and quickly pardoned most of the prominent southerners.

It was the passage of the Black Codes by southern states, the election of former Confederates to Congress, violence against the freedmen and President Johnson's opposition to Congressional efforts to secure the rights of the freedmen by his veto of the Freedman's Bureau and his opposition to the 14th Amendment that significantly changed the course of Reconstruction policy. In an effort to protect the rights of freedmen and the outcome of the war, Congress refused to admit returning Southern officials to Congress. A Congressional Reconstruction plan was passed by the so-called "Radical Republicans" who won control of Congress in the 1866 elections. This plan split the former Confederacy into five military districts. Congress impeached Johnson to ensure that as commander in chief he could not undermine its efforts. Although he was not removed from office, Johnson's power was curtailed. The Union army attempted to enforce the 13th, 14th and 15th amendments.

The **13th Amendment** freed slaves throughout the United States. Recognition of this amendment was required of southern states before they could form new governments. However, the Black Codes demonstrated that southerners were not willing to recognize the rights of the newly freed slaves. The **14th Amendment** overturned the *Dred Scott* decision by recognizing the citizenship of African Americans; it

upheld the right of all citizens to “equal protection” before the laws and “due process” of law. The **15th Amendment** was passed to ensure that the right to vote of all male citizens, in the North as well as in the South, would not be denied based on “race, creed or previous condition of servitude” and was motivated in part by the desire of the Republican Party to establish its political power in the South. Federal troops stationed in the South attempted to ensure that these rights were protected despite the terrorist tactics of the Ku Klux Klan and other vigilante groups.

As a result of the rights granted through these amendments and protected by the army, there were temporary **political effects** on the South. Freedmen were able to exercise the right to vote and elected African Americans to state legislatures and to Congress. Most southern governments were not dominated by freedmen, however they were in the hands of a sympathetic Republican Party. Some of these Republicans came from the North as missionaries and entrepreneurs and were derisively called ‘carpetbaggers’ by southern whites. Others were southern-born ‘scalawags’ who wanted to promote the rebuilding of the South in cooperation with the Reconstruction governments. It is important for students to understand that these terms are those applied by the southerners who resented such cooperation. Like their counterparts in the North, southern state governments were often corrupt but were the *most* democratic governments that the south had ever had. African Americans were elected to the House of Representatives and the Senate, representing southern states, but no African American was ever elected governor.

Although freedom brought significant **social change** for African Americans initially there was little change for the white population. Social classes remained fairly stable despite the loss of economic status by the planter elite. States passed laws that began public education. Schools, however, were segregated.

Reconstruction had little **economic impact** on the South. The economy continued to rest on agriculture and cotton, but now depended on sharecropping rather than slave labor. The national government did not see its role as taking an active hand in managing the economy until the 20th century and so the national government did not rebuild the war-torn region economically. The South remained in a state of economic depression well into the 20th century.

The resolve of Congress to protect the freedman waned in the face of continuing resistance of southerners to granting equal citizenship to African Americans as well as other issues including the corruption of the Grant administration and economic depression in the North. The disputed election of 1876 led to the compromise of 1877 and the withdrawal of federal troops from the South. The effect of Reconstruction was temporary and African Americans were left to fend for themselves in a hostile environment.

It is not essential for the students to know:

Although students should understand the conflict between the president and Congress over who should control Reconstruction, it is not necessary that they know the details of the Wade Davis Bill or Lincoln’s pocket veto. They do not need to understand that Johnson’s hatred of the planter class was the motivation behind his requirement that wealthy southerners seek a presidential pardon, nor that he was a racist. They do not need to know that the Republican Congress got a veto-proof majority in the elections of 1866 and took this as a mandate for further actions to protect the freedman. They do not need to know the details of Johnson’s impeachment including the Tenure of Office Act or his firing of Secretary of War Stanton. Students do not need to know about the role of the Supreme Court in the Reconstruction controversies or the cases of *Ex parte Milligan* or *Texas v White*. Students do not need to know about the amnesty acts, force bills or the process of ‘redemption’ by white southerners of their state governments. Students do not need to remember the details of the disputed election of 1876 or the Compromise of 1877.

Assessment guidelines:

Appropriate assessments will require students to **summarize** the political, social and economic effects of Reconstruction on the southern states. They should be able to **compare** the presidential and congressional plans for Reconstruction and **explain** the reasons for the differences. They should be able to **identify** the provisions of the Thirteenth, Fourteenth, and Fifteenth Amendments and **explain** the limitations of these amendments in that era. Students should be able to **interpret** maps, graphs, charts, illustrations and political cartoons to **infer** their relationship to information about the time period.

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